giving me all the facilities in examining species in AMNH. A. S. Martins designed Fig. 1. Financial support came principally from WWF-USA, Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico (CNPq) and The Frank M. Chapman Memorial Fund.

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A critique of the description of *Amazona auropalliata caribaea* Lousada, 1989

by Kenneth C. Parkes

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Lousada (1989) describes a supposed subspecies of the Yellow-naped Parrot *Amazona auropalliata* from the Bay Islands of Honduras. His paper contains serious flaws, attributable to Mr Lousada's admitted inexperience in taxonomic studies. No criticism is intended of the Editor and the readers of Mr Lousada's manuscript, as most of the flaws are not detectable from a reading of the paper itself. I wrote to Mr Lousada (30 January 1990) about several of the points I shall be mentioning, and he has responded to these (5 February 1990). I present first some background material on this group of parrots that was not included in Lousada's paper as published.

SPECIES LIMITS

Most authors (Peters 1937, Monroe & Howell 1966, Monroe 1968, Forshaw 1978, Ridgely 1982) have considered *A. auropalliata* (and *A. oratrix* of Mexico and Belize) to be conspecific with *A. ochrocephala* of northern South America north to Panama (with what appears to be an outlying population in northern Honduras). Several of these authors have suggested tentatively that this complex might better be treated as 3 allospecies. The American Ornithologists' Union (1983) has adopted this

latter treatment, with English names Yellow-headed Parrot (*A. oratrix*), Yellow-naped Parrot (*A. auropalliata*) and Yellow-crowned Parrot (*A. ochrocephala*). Lousada also adopted this concept, but his Table 1 is confusing: he lists "*A. oratrix*" as a binomial, followed by listings for "*A. o. belizensis*" and "*A. o. belizensis* (NW Honduras)", but there is no indication as to whether "*o.*" stands for *ochrocephala* or *oratrix*. In fact, *belizensis* Monroe & Howell belongs to the *oratrix* group, whereas records from the "NW Honduras" (= Sula Valley) pertain to members of the *ochrocephala* and *auropalliata* groups and thus cannot be assigned to *belizensis*. Lousada nowhere discusses *belizensis*, nor, despite describing its soft-part colours, does he list it among his "*Specimens examined*". In addition, he describes the soft-part colours of what he calls "*A. a. parvipes* (Mosquitia birds)", but he actually examined only photographs of one specimen, the holotype, from the Mosquitia region, so perhaps his use of the plural rests on close field observations.

THE SULA VALLEY, HONDURAS, SPECIMENS

In addition to sight records, there are 2 yellow-crowned (*ochrocephala*) specimens from the Sula Valley of northwestern Honduras, one at the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia (ANSP), and the other at the Museum of Zoology, Louisiana State University (LSU) (Monroe & Howell 1966, Monroe 1968). These are presumably the specimens allocated to "*A. o. belizensis* (NW Honduras)" by Lousada, although apparently not examined by him.

In addition to the 2 yellow-crowned specimens, there are also 2 museum skins of the yellow-naped (*auropalliata*) group from the Sula Valley. Monroe & Howell (1966) believed that the yellow-crowned (*ochrocephala*) birds represented the true resident population of the Sula Valley, and that, in the absence of other records, the 2 yellow-naped birds were wanderers or escaped cagebirds from the yellow-naped populations of eastern Honduras or the Bay Islands. Lousada, however, states (*in litt.*) that he has "two contacts who have seen flocks of 20+ yellow-naped birds in this region". Of the 2 yellow-naped skins, Carnegie Museum of Natural History (CM) holds one, a male from Chasniguas (CM 20448). The other, a female from Urraco, is in the collection of the Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University (MCZ) (Peters 1927). Lousada states (*in litt.*) that he measured "the second Sula Valley specimen" himself, but does not mention the MCZ, and he is apparently referring to an ex-captive female yellow-naped bird, said to have come from Omoa, that he donated to CM. This would account for his having listed two Sula Valley specimens being in CM. Unfortunately this female was prepared in CM as a skeleton before its significance was realized. It will be mentioned again later.

"SPECIMENS EXAMINED"

There are 4 specimens of *A. auropalliata* from the Bay Islands in CM, but although listed under "*Specimens examined*" Lousada actually saw none of them. Instead, at his request, colour slides of these specimens were sent to him by Mr J. Loughlin, Collection Manager in the Section of Birds at this museum. Lousada also lists the holotype of *Amazona ochrocephala*

(=*auropalliata*) *parvipes* Monroe & Howell (Univ. California at Los Angeles (UCLA) no. 51465) under "*Specimens examined*" and in his diagnosis of *A. a.* "*caribaea*" he describes a difference in bill colour between the latter race and "the type of *A. a. parvipes*". Dr Howell has informed me that Lousada never handled the holotype of *parvipes*; his knowledge of its appearance was based on photographs supplied by Howell.

MEASUREMENT TABLE

Specimen measurements made by different workers may not agree, so it should be noted, though it was not stated, that the measurements of the 4 "*caribaea*" and the male from the Sula Valley were taken at CM by Mr Loughlin. Lousada mentions having examined a series (20+) of *A. a. auropalliata* at the British Museum (Natural History) (BMNH), but the measurements for 18 ♂♂ and 15 ♀♀ *auropalliata* in his Table 2 were not those of the BMNH series, but were, in fact, copied, without credit, from Monroe & Howell (1966), Lousada's visit to the BMNH having occurred before his correspondence with Dr Thomas R. Howell had persuaded him that measurements would be desirable (Lousada *in litt.*).

"DESCRIPTION OF HOLOTYPE"

Explaining how he describes the colours of such areas as the under wing coverts and undersides of the flight feathers that were invisible in the photograph supplied to him by Mr Loughlin, Lousada (*in litt.*) admitted that his description, rather than being of the holotype (CM No. 131584, which, incidentally, was collected in 1947, not 1948 as reported by Lousada), is actually a composite, based in large part on his handling of the 5 Isla Roatán specimens in the BMNH. It is impossible, therefore, to know whether the described colours were based on the slide of the holotype or the specimens at Tring.

A detailed description of a holotype is somewhat surprising in a paper describing a new subspecies as opposed to a species, especially as "*caribaea*" is only characterized as differing from *A. a. parvipes* in bill colour. Since this description contains many flaws, of which I have informed Mr Lousada, it is as well that the description is in fact superfluous.

AGE-RELATED CHANGES IN BILL COLOURS

Lousada describes (p. 234) certain supposedly age-related changes in bill colour in *A. a.* "*caribaea*", stating that "Any Medium Plumbeous (87) [of Smithe 1975] colouration on the mandibles may gradually decrease in area and change to ivory or Pale Horn (92)". Examination of the CM series reveals that the Pale Horn area, at least on the upper mandible, is an outer keratin layer that scales away, usually from the tip caudally, but also, in some, on the lateral edges. The layer below, revealed by the exfoliation of the Pale Horn layer, is grey, but itself becomes paler, turning to Pale Horn and eventually scaling away to reveal a fresh grey area. Thus the relationship of grey and Pale Horn areas of the bill seems to be time-related, but not necessarily age-related *per se*. An individual parrot will have a constantly shifting ratio between Pale Horn and grey areas of the bill through its lifetime, although Lousada's data indicate that the bills of *juveniles* are quite consistently dark.

THE STATUS OF "*CARIBAEA*"

Monroe & Howell (1966) described *Amazona ochrocephala* [=*auropalliata*] *parvipes* as the population of the Mosquitia region of northeastern Nicaragua and adjacent eastern Honduras, and also of the Bay Islands population now named "*caribaea*" by Lousada. They tentatively assigned the yellow-naped birds from the Sula Valley of northwestern Honduras to *parvipes*, although these were taken in a habitat quite different from the *Pinus caribaea* stands preferred by *parvipes* elsewhere. Monroe & Howell characterized *parvipes* as differing from *auropalliata* of the Pacific slope "in smaller size, notably in smaller feet; in the presence of red at the bend of the wing; and in the generally paler, less heavily pigmented bill".

Among the Caribbean populations of *A. auropalliata* (Mosquitia, Bay Islands, Sula Valley) there are no size differences, all being smaller than nominate *auropalliata* from the Pacific slope. Lousada (Table 2) accepts the Sula Valley population as referable to *parvipes*, as tentatively suggested by Monroe & Howell; however, in Table 1 he gives no soft-part colours for the Sula Valley population of *parvipes*, only for Mosquitia birds.

Lousada states that his new subspecies "differs from the type of *A. a. parvipes* . . ." in having a predominantly ivory coloured bill; but his Table 1 confines this difference to the lower mandible, described as mostly Pale Horn in *caribaea* and Blackish Neutral Gray in Mosquitia *parvipes*. However, with bill colour as the sole deciding criterion, the Sula Valley population cannot be assigned to *parvipes* on this basis. Fortunately the rhamphotheca is still present on the Omoa specimen donated to CM by Lousada (now CM skeleton no. S-12033). Its amount of pigmentation closely matches the bill of the more heavily pigmented of the two CM adult males of "*caribaea*", although the pale portions differ in actual colour in this recent specimen from those of the study skins, which are more than 40 years old. Furthermore, the bill of the CM Sula Valley study skin is even paler, with the colours of both mandibles inseparable from those of the series of "*caribaea*".

As mentioned earlier, Monroe & Howell characterized *parvipes* as having a "generally paler, less heavily pigmented bill" than Pacific *auropalliata*. Other than the 2 Sula Valley skins and the Bay Islands specimens, their series included 8 specimens from the Mosquitia region (1 Honduras, 7 Nicaragua). It would be remarkable indeed if Monroe & Howell failed to notice that the lower mandibles of the Mosquitia series were consistently and strikingly more heavily pigmented than those of the Bay Islands and Sula Valley birds.

At my request, Dr Howell examined the paratypical series of 7 *parvipes* at UCLA, noting the colours of the lower mandibles, the only alleged character separating *parvipes* from "*caribaea*". He reported (telephone conversation, 8 March 1990) that all except 3 of the specimens have relatively pale lower mandibles, as in the Bay Islands birds. In the other 3 the lower mandibles do indeed appear blackish. Each of these, however, exhibits shot-holes in the bill, and Dr Howell believes that the dark colour could have been caused by blood perfusing the bill after the shot damage. There are no such holes in the pale lower mandibles.

It is clear that in addition to the numerous infelicities in Lousada's paper, his supposed Bay Islands subspecies relies for differentiation on a single variable colour character that could be based on an artifact, namely the perfusion of blood in the bills of the holotype and some other specimens of *parvipes*. The Yellow-naped Parrots of the Bay Islands of Honduras are thus referrable to *Amazona auropalliata parvipes* Monroe & Howell, as originally described, with *A. a. caribaea* Lousada as a synonym.

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Sebastian Lousada provided me with much information not included in his paper, and lent me the photograph of the holotype of *parvipes*. Dr Thomas R. Howell kindly examined the type series of that race and described their bills for me during a telephone conversation. He, Dr D. Scott Wood, and the Editor made useful suggestions on the organization and wording of this paper.

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Basileuterus flaveolus (Baird) in Guyana

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The main purpose of a stay on Dadanawa Ranch, Rupununi South Savannas, Guyana, between August and October 1989, was to compare the avifauna of these savannas with that of the Sipaliwini Savanna in southern Surinam (which we had studied in 1966 and 1972). In spite of their being no more than 300 km apart, we found that the avifaunae of the 2 savanna regions were remarkably different, a point that will not be further elaborated here.